

# Happiness is....

## Winning a €10,000 prize!

The lucky winner, Moninne Agnew had, over the years, re-decorated the interior of her home to look stylish and be very comfortable. But comfort is more than just a nice floor covering and a squashy sofa because whilst her home looked good, in the energy stakes it was a very poor performer indeed with a BER rating of 'F'. Looking for ideas and help to improve things, Moninne visited the SelfBuild & Improve Your Home Show at Citywest in Dublin last September where she entered a competition for a fabulous prize of €10,000 donated by the organisers, SelfBuild Ireland Ltd., for the winner to spend on building materials towards either a home improvement or self-build project.

"If I hadn't won I never would have done

the work," Moninne explained. "There was a lot of insulation needed and of course that's not something you can do piecemeal, like the interiors." Moninne contacted a company she had met at the Show and they swung into action by helping her to find Registered contractors and alerting her to the financial help available for projects such as hers. Indeed, the whole process was very smooth as the team processed the grant application through SEAI on her behalf.

The main house was built in 1959 with solid walls and an extension added in 1994 is of cavity construction. With the prize money and grants, Moninne was able to have these solid walls insulated externally whilst the cavity in the extension was fully filled and all walls were finished with a sand based acrylic

render to give a uniform look.

Internally, the front roofspace insulation was upgraded to bring it up to current Building Regulations standard, in addition all the exposed pipework, water tank and access hatch were insulated. The rear flat roofed section had given Moninne problems in the past with leakages so the advice was to completely remove it and replace with a new roof, with which she agreed. It was all insulated and finished off with new lead flashing to the chimney and valleys and weather sealed back under the existing pitched roof.

Moninne is delighted with the way the house not only looks but performs as well, not to mention the savings she will make on her energy bills. The house is now an excellent 'C3' rating and Moninne is in the happy position of having a house that was built in the mid twentieth century but is as good as any newbuild today.

**Project co-ordinator:** Kingspan Retrofit, Castleblaney, Co Monaghan tel. 042 9754 626 [www.kingspanretrofit.ie](http://www.kingspanretrofit.ie)

**External insulation works:** Pw Thermal Building Solutions Ltd., from Eco Thermal Homes, Dublin 24 tel. 02 420 1771 [www.pwthermalsolutions.com](http://www.pwthermalsolutions.com)

**Pumped cavity insulation:** 360 Insulations Ltd., Clara, Co Offaly tel. 083 3551 795 [www.360insulations.com](http://www.360insulations.com)

**Attic & flat roof insulation:** Eco Thermal Homes as above.



## Design for life = a house for life

Self-building is arguably the most fulfilling and successful way of achieving a home ideally suited to your needs and wants. Life however is a continuous process and has many different stages, each with their own special and specific requirements. What is ideal for two fit thirty-somethings with young children is likely to be quite the opposite for an elderly single person. It's a situation we have been looking at in these pages with our second article on the subject starting on page 92.

Altering the way a house is laid out and functions is generally a varying combination of expensive and problematical with the

result being 'the best that could be achieved within the budget', as well as an unsettling upheaval for all involved. Many people prefer just to move or 'downsize' but that brings its own disruption as also left behind, more often than not, are friends, support networks and the ease that familiarity with a neighbourhood brings. With houses now being built to require virtually no financial outlay on energy costs to run, a huge burden has been lifted and in the very near future that will no longer be the powerful driver for change it currently is. With that removed, the focus now falls on design, Universal Design.

Due to be launched within the next two

months are 'The Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland' and the 'Universal Design Guidelines for Dementia Friendly Dwellings for People Living with Dementia, their Families and Carers'. The aim of the reports is to inform everyone involved in the construction of houses on how to create in Ireland homes suitable for everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or disability. In our next issue we will be looking at the ideas behind Universal Design in general, and how these can be incorporated into your own self-build to create a home you need never have to leave.

See [www.universaldesign.ie](http://www.universaldesign.ie)